



## ✚ Resting in the Work of God: Why I Love the Sabbath

April 19, 2009



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When I began studying the Sabbath controversy a few years ago I had no idea what I was getting into. I say “controversy,” because I knew the Bible had always talked of the Sabbath as Saturday, the seventh day of the week, but everyone I knew had always recognized Sunday as the day to keep holy. I suppose it wasn’t a controversy in a way because Sunday was so well established as the day of rest, there was no need to question it. Beyond that, nobody really refrained from worldly activities, work or pleasure on any day anyway, so it just didn’t seem like a big deal. So much of the world recognized Sunday as the day of rest, I figured the priests, pastors, scholars and other Christians knew better than I did and honestly, the Sabbath didn’t seem like a big issue either way.

In a few months time studying, the marvelous simplicity and divine purpose of a seemingly irrelevant Sabbath became so poignantly clear and relevant to me, it arrested my mind and heart because it was such a inexpressibly beautiful symbol of God’s Grace. I had never comprehended the true significance of the Sabbath because I was never taught its true meaning. Even today I think very few Christians, pastors, priests, scholars or theologians understand the importance of the Sabbath, but God clearly states His intentions for it, saying “Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, **to be a sign** between me and them, that they might know that **I am the LORD that sanctify them.**” (Eze 20:12)

Many Christians today argue those who keep the Sabbath are attempting to gain Heaven by works. It is ironic don’t you think, that God gave the Sabbath to be a sign to His people that they acknowledge **HE is the one that sanctifies us?** In other words, the very thing God instructed us to do in order to recognize that we are not saved by our own works, Satan has twisted around, tricking people into believing it is a sign that we sanctify ourselves!

The Bible is profoundly clear “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:..” The Bible tells us that our salvation is a gift from God. A gift is not acquired by works, otherwise it ceases to be a gift. We do not earn our salvation, it is “Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Eph 2:8-9) If we are not sanctified, or brought into harmony with God’s requirements by our own works, how are we sanctified? “For we are **his workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” (Eph 2:10) We are the workmanship of Jesus Christ. It’s Jesus’ job to bring us into harmony with Him, not ours. Nevertheless, there is a human component. He cannot and will not do this without our permission. “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but **yield** yourselves unto God..” (Rom 6:13) One of the greatest gifts of God is our ability to exercise our own

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will freely. Here is where the gospel comes to life in the Sabbath commandment — the Sabbath is a sign we are submitting our will to God's will, resting from our work, because we are trusting in the work God has said He will do in us. "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that **I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.**" (Exo 31:13)

In keeping the Sabbath, God's people are telling God they are trusting Him to sanctify them. They recognize they cannot save themselves by their own works, so they rest from their works, trusting in the work God has promised He will do; our sanctification and redemption. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:" (1Co 1:30)

In the Old Covenant, God's people agreed they would keep God's Ten Commandments. "And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do.." (Exo 19:8) In the New Covenant, God said "**..I will** put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and **I will** be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:" (Heb 8:10) So when it comes to the Old and New Testaments, who does the work of sanctification, bringing us into harmony with God's laws? Isn't the Old Covenant a promise by God's people to keep His laws, whereas the New Covenant is a promise by God to bring His people into conformity with His laws? How marvelous then is the Sabbath!? In keeping the Sabbath, we are resting from our works because it is evidence of the fact we are trusting God will do the work!

When God gave the Ten Commandments, who led the Israelites out of the house of Bondage? Before God spoke a single commandment, He said "**I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.**" (Exo 20:2) So too the promise here is that God will bring us out of the bondage of sin, that we too may dwell with Him in the eternal promised land. We should never forget the Sabbath any more than we should forget it is God who sanctifies us.

The power of God to enable us to keep His commandments is so strong an evidence of God's work in us, the Bible says "**He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar**, and the truth is not in him." (1Jn 2:4) As followers of Jesus, our love for God is perfected when we adhere to His commandments, "**..whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected:** hereby know we that we are in him." (1Jn 2:5) When the open door of salvation is closed, Jesus will turn to many people who called themselves Christians and say to them, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work **iniquity.**" (Mat 7:23) Iniquity is violation of law (see Strong's G458). While these Christians so-called, claimed to serve Jesus, they would not obey Him. Again, our obedience to God's law is the strongest evidence that God knows us and is working in us, for it is written, "And hereby **we do know that we know him**, if we keep his commandments." (1Jn 2:3) When we strive to obey God's laws, we are upholding and honoring the Cross and all that Jesus died for. When we call ourselves Christians but break the law of God, we have "**.. trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?**" (Heb 10:29)

A single commandment kept for any other reason than out of a love for God is legalism and a man-made attempt at salvation by one's own works. So why keep God's commandments? Jesus said "**If ye love me**, keep my commandments." (Joh 14:15) When we obey God because we love Him, it's selfless. When we obey God for any other reason, it's selfish. One of the best illustrations of the relationship between love and grace was given by John Wesley who said "I cannot spare the law one moment, no more than I can spare Christ... each is continually sending me to the other, — the law to Christ, and Christ to the law... the height and depth of the law constrain me to fly to the love of God in Christ... the love of God in Christ endears the law to me 'above gold or precious stones;'" - *John Wesley, The Original, Nature, Property, and Use of the Law . IV.7*

If there be any confusion over the strongest proof of our love for God, let it be the evidence of God's law working in us, "For **this is the love of God**, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." (1Jn

5:3) The evidence of our love for God is not measured by the good things we do or how many sacrifices we make. “..Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice..” (1 Sam. 15:22) Our attitudes should be that of David who wrote “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.” (Psa 40:8) David kept God’s laws, because he loved Him, because God’s laws were written upon his heart.

The Garden of Eden was full of trees, yet there was one specific tree that was unlike the others. As long as Adam and Eve distinguished the tree of the knowledge of good and evil from all other trees and refused to eat of it, they obeyed God and remained united with Him. Not with a tree, but in like manner, God has separated a day of the week from all other days and “blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” (Exo 20:11) We must learn the lesson of Adam and Eve, and recognize the difference between the holy and the profane. Yet, like the Israelites of old, could it be said of God’s people today, “**Her priests have violated my law**, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and **have hid their eyes from my sabbaths**, and I am profaned among them?” (Eze 22:26)

Still today, priest’s and the ministers of God’s Word teach Jesus’ death on the cross did away with God’s law, though Jesus came to “magnify the law, and make it honourable.” (Isa 42:21) Jesus said “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Mat 5:17-19) The death of Christ in no way removed the obligation of God’s commandments. If not even a tittle, such as the dot of an “i” or the crossing of a “t” can be changed from God’s law, how can man change or remove an entire commandment? “Behold, I have received commandment to bless: and **he hath blessed; and I cannot reverse it.**” (Num 23:20) Be wary of those who seek to lead astray! “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.” (2Ti 4:3-4) Take heed lest anyone teach you to forget which that God hath said to “Remember!” (Exo. 20:8)

Clearly “by grace are ye saved through faith;” but Paul added “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” (Eph 2:8, Rom 3:31) The reason the law is established is because even Jesus had to die to pay the penalty of death the law demanded (Rom. 6:23). **The law is then established as unchangeable due to the fact God would not suspend the law even to save the life of His only begotten Son (John 3:16).** “What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law:” (Rom 7:7) The Sabbath commandment is just as relevant and obligatory as any other of the nine commandments. Throughout His life, Jesus kept the Sabbath (Luke 4:16). Even preaching of the destruction of Jerusalem forty years after His death and resurrection, Jesus expected His followers to be keeping the Sabbath when He said “pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:” (Mat 24:20)

I do love the Sabbath because it shows God I know I am trusting Him to sanctify me! (Exo. 31:13, Eze. 20:12) “But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and **we all are the work of thy hand.**” (Isa 64:8) Temptation to sin is incredibly strong, so it truly does bring rest and peace to the soul to acknowledge it is God’s job to sanctify me and save me by His enduring Grace — therefore I love keeping the Sabbath as a sign and symbol of that fact.

The other reason I love the Sabbath, is because it is a sign to both God and the world that “..I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed..” (2Ti 1:12) The Sabbath commandment states “For in six days **the LORD made** heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” (Exo 20:11) Along with the Sabbath commandment is here enjoined the second purpose of the Sabbath, that we recognize it is God who has created us. “And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, **that ye**

**may know that I am the LORD your God.”** (Eze 20:20) In the age of evolution and countless other devices invented to rob God of His Creatorship and worship, the Sabbath is especially relevant today, because “It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever: for in six days **the LORD made** heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.” (Exo 31:17) The Sabbath is especially relevant today, in a time when science “so called,” invents and promotes evolution and other devices to turn people from the unequivocal fact we have a loving Creator. These are they “Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen” (Rom 1:25) I count it a blessing to keep the Sabbath and distinguish the God whom I serve from all others. “For all the gods of the people are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.” (1Ch 16:26)

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Not only does keeping the Sabbath acknowledge God as the Creator of the heavens, the earth, and us — but it is also a sign that we recognize God will do the work of re-creating us into the image of His Son. Sanctifying and molding fallen humanity into the sinless image of Jesus Christ is no work any human can perform but requires a divine work of re-Creation only God can accomplish. This is why it's God's work to sanctify us and not ours, “lest any man should boast.” “For we are his workmanship, **CREATED** in Christ Jesus unto good works...” (Eph 2:10) The promise of God's work recreating us into His image is here made: “It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body...The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven...And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” (1Co 15:44,47,49)

Keeping the Sabbath is not only a sign we recognize God created the heavens and the earth, but it is a sign we recognize he will recreate us as David desired when his heart's plea was “**CREATE** in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” (Psa 51:10) Just as God will re-create us, He will one day re-create the heavens and the earth also! Given the Sabbath is a sign God is the Creator, so long as God remains the Creator, the Sabbath will stand. “For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, **and from one sabbath to another**, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.” (Isa 66:22-23)

I love the Sabbath because it is also a sign that we *believe* in the God of the Bible. “For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same **example of unbelief.**” (Heb 4:10-11) So there can be no doubt as to which day the Bible here designates as the day of rest, the Bible states “For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.” (Heb. 4:4-5, KJV) Though the seventh-day is given as a sign of belief in God, we're told many refused to keep the Sabbath because of unbelief. “..And they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief:” (Heb 4:6) Can anyone who doesn't believe in God keep the Sabbath? Of course not! In fact, most all religions can keep any of the Ten Commandments without a problem. They teach reverence of God, honoring you parents, that a person should not steal, lie, commit adultery, murder or covet, but here the Sabbath separates us from the world. The Sabbath testifies that we follow Jesus and are walking as He walked. Here too, is evidence of the ability of the Sabbath to distinguish the followers of Jesus from the rest of an unbelieving world. “And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God.” (Eze 20:20)

The accusation is somewhat true that Sabbath keeping is a works-based belief. We should just define whose work it is that molds us into the image of Christ. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as **by the Spirit of the Lord.**” (2Co 3:18) It is God's Holy Spirit that convicts us when we break God's laws, “..because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through **sanctification of the Spirit** and belief of the truth:” (2Th 2:13) As we learn to submit to the convictions of the Holy Spirit, we are

changed, into the glory (the character) of God (see my other note on “Defining God’s Glory”). To all who are working their best to attain Heaven with a broken spirit, the loving words of Jesus are fitly spoken, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Mat 11:28)

I fully recognize I shall not see a day in Heaven except by the Grace of God. So I cease from my work on the seventh-day as God did from His, as a sign that it is His work in me that prepares me for Heaven and not my own. I am by no means perfect, but “we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins:” (1Jn 2:1-2) “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord..” (Rom 6:11-12)

For these reasons I do love the Sabbath, and for the multitude of blessings the Sabbath brings every week, even the promise “If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: **for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.**” (Isa 58:13-14)

“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: **for sin is the transgression of the law.**” (1Jn 3:4) “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but **the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.**” (Rom 6:22-23)

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